

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-9 (Canceled).

Claim 10 (New): A method for controlling operation of a sensor associated with an exhaust-gas purifying mechanism of an internal combustion engine, comprising:

comparing an output signal of the sensor with a reference value; and

acting on the sensor to decrease the difference between the output signal and the reference value.

Claim 11 (New): A method according to claim 10, wherein the acting on modifies an operating temperature of the sensor.

Claim 12 (New): A method according to claim 11, wherein the acting on changes a supply voltage of the sensor from a nominal supply voltage.

Claim 13 (New): A method according to claim 10, wherein the sensor is acted on as a function of the difference between the output signal of the sensor and the reference value determined during a phase of regeneration of the purifying mechanism.

Claim 14 (New): A method according to claim 10, wherein the sensor is acted on as a function of the difference between the output signal of the sensor and the reference value determined during a final stage of a phase of regeneration of the purifying mechanism.

Claim 15 (New): A method according to claim 10, wherein a failure of the sensor is detected as a function of the action applied to the sensor to decrease the difference between the output signal and the reference value.

Claim 16 (New): A device for controlling operation of a sensor associated with an exhaust-gas purifying mechanism of an internal combustion engine, comprising:
measuring means for determining a difference between an output signal of the sensor and a reference value; and
means for controlling the supply voltage of the sensor as a function of the difference between the output signal of the sensor and the reference value.

Claim 17 (New): A device according to claim 16, wherein the sensor is an oxygen sensor of all-or-nothing type disposed downstream from a catalytic converter.

Claim 18 (New): A device according to claim 16, further comprising:
a detection module configured to detect stages of a phase of regeneration of the exhaust-gas purifying mechanism based on a signal delivered by the sensor; and
a measuring module configured to determine a difference between the output signal of the sensor and a reference value during a final stage of a regeneration phase.